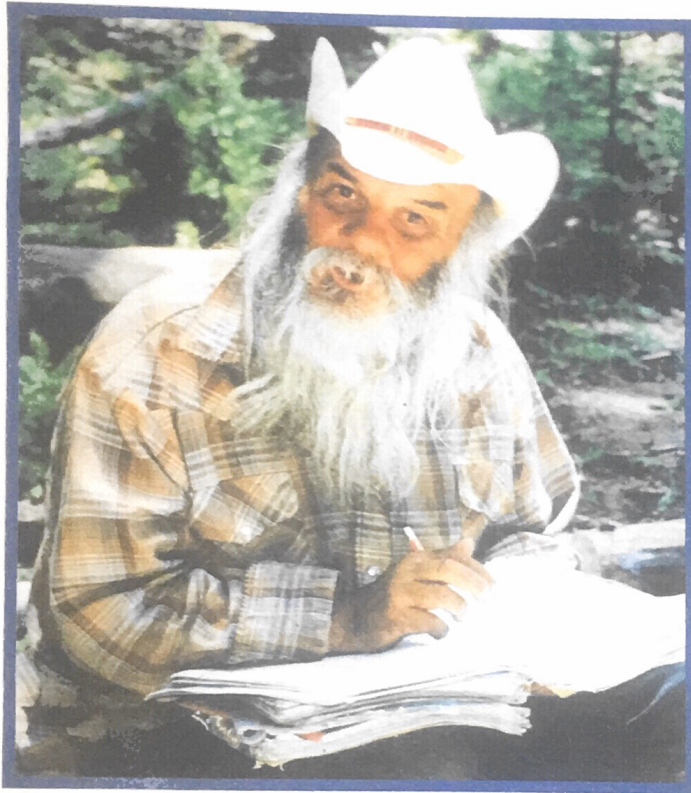




# Rainbow Family Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.  
Interviews with Rainbow  
Family of Living Light  
folks conducted between  
1977 and 2008.*

*Scanned in 2018.  
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13.G HARMONY - "A Real Movie with  
Real People"

6 pages

[13.G]



## Harmony - A Real Movie With Real People

[Harmony lived up to his name by calming down potential quarrels at the Rainbow House and especially smoothing things between Richard and various other people.]

I was born in Ottumwa, Iowa in 1942 - about 38,000 people there. My daddy was coming home from the war in 1945. My mother was pregnant and my father had been overseas for two years. My mother stepped in front of a train, because in 1945, a married woman... She couldn't face him. That's why he drank. That's the tragedy of war. It's not just the people dying in wars. It reaches so far into families. Nobody escapes.

My father remarried in 1947. He worked as a repairman and a sheet metal man for Iowa Gas and Repair Company. My stepmother pressed clothes in a dry-cleaning plant - before air conditioning. The plant was real hot in the summertime. She was a real strong woman. We would have had a lot of money if it hadn't been for John Barley corn. My father spent a lot of his money drinking - most of it. If my stepmother hadn't worked, we never would have made it. We had a vegetable garden. We canned a lot of them. That helped. Now there's a super market sitting where our garden was. I saw my stepmother three years ago. I hadn't seen her since 1958. We got drunk together, talked about old times.

My stepmother once told me that the only reason she was staying with my father was because of me. I went to stay with my aunt and uncle in Tinnsdale, a rich suburb of Chicago when I was still a teen-ager. My stepmother left my father shortly after that.

I found out I was a hillbilly. It's like if you ask people around Chicago, "What's the dividing line between northern and southern Illinois?" you'll get ten different answers. Some people will say 30 miles south of Chicago. And anybody south of that is a hillbilly. I grew up hating hillbillies. All my life I heard hillbillies were second class citizens and now I found out people were calling me a hillbilly.



There was no more beer and cigarettes for me because my aunt and uncle were very clean, moral upright citizens. There was church every Sunday, Sunday night, Wednesday night. I got where I liked it, got really into Jesus. I became a leader of the youth group in church. If you were popular enough, you could be the leader. It was the Evangelical Covenant Church of America, a break-off of the Lutheran Church - very conservative. After high school, I went to Covenant Bible Institute in Saskatchewan and then to North Park College and Theological Seminary in Chicago for a year. I was studying to be a minister. I worked summers, and I took off some semesters to work.

Have you ever stood outside a big factory entrance and watched the people when they get off work and leave? You can be run over by them. The people run out. They charge to escape work.

The first factory I ever worked in was in Willow Springs, right outside of Chicago, a plastic factory. I was grinding rubber for eight hours a day for months. One day it was the middle of summer - real hot. I had my little brown lunch bag. I went to the owner - he had given me the job as a favor - and I quit. I went home and I showered and put my suit on and went to the company that made speed reading equipment and walked out of there as a salesman. They had never used a salesman before to sell their stuff. They always sold it through the mail. I had used their stuff and I thought it was good. I offered to sell it to people I knew - ministers, businessmen, students. I was ready to take 20% of the money on each piece of equipment I sold. I thought that would be good. And they gave me 50%. I was 20 then.

One day my roommate at ministerial school said, "You know what you ought to do? You ought to be a radio announcer." So I went to broadcasting school. I was a 13-week wonder. In 1966, I got out of broadcasting school. I married my fiancée of four years. I went to work as a radio announcer and she went to work as a teacher.

When I was 29, I was the ideal American family. Had a kid. Owned my own business - a wagon jobber, a salesman essentially. I had a house in the suburbs, a lot in the country. Between us, we



were making \$25,000 a year. I was a Sunday school teacher. This hillbilly president of a motorcycle gang moved in next door into a basement apartment. We became friends because he was my neighbor. At that stage I had already gone through the trip with the marriage counsellors. It was already apparent our marriage wasn't much any more. In my family, divorce wasn't unknown, but in my wife's family, it was. My in-laws had a lot to say about our relationship. We got divorced in 1971. Just before I got divorced, the motorcycle gang brother took me to a party, handed me a joint and told me, "Suck it in to your lungs as deep as you can, hold it as long as you can and blow it out slow through your nose." And I got high.

I started riding a motorcycle. In the same town I met a whole big group of people who loved me at a time I really needed love. I just kept turning into new things like acid not long after. I made a statement, "All I do is smoke pot and hash and I'm not going to do any chemicals." But one of the brothers in the bike club heard me say that and he took it as a personal challenge to change my mind about that. He slipped some strawberry mescaline in my beer without telling me. I didn't go kill anybody or anything, I didn't lose my mind. The circles I had been into for years, all people talked about drugs were the scary things. But like there are a lot of scary things in Grimm's Fairy Tales or the Bible. I now had an altered viewpoint, an altered state of consciousness. All those things I had heard about.

Getting into fights in the bike gang - it was what everybody else in the bike gang was doing, so it didn't feel weird. I was busting out. I was free. I had a lot of frustration to work out. It wasn't long before I could stop a fight from happening in too.

It took me three years to get to a Rainbow Gathering after I first heard of the Rainbow Family. I went to the New Mexico Gathering in 1974.

I was getting into a peace-love trip instead of hostility and violence. Peace-love swept the whole bike club about the same time. It was like, "Why go get my face punched every Friday night?"



Let's just sit around and roll another joint. A lot of the club got married and started raising a family. Most of them weren't into sending their kids to school. They just want to be left alone to get high and raise their kids.

The gathering was probably the place where I saw and felt a lot of freedom among the people - sharing together. A lot of people loved me. Kind of a primal survival instinct was manifest there that said, "We want to be free together."

After I left the gathering I went back to Chicago and worked a few weeks as a carpenter and then I quit and hit the road and I've been hanging around with Family people ever since. One brother gave me 20,000 peyote buttons to sell. But the medicine goes where the medicine goes in spite of all our efforts to sell it.

I got to Austin about a week after David Beckwith and his old lady Cindy first rented the place for the Austin Communications Co-op. In the beginning, December 12, 1977, a sister named Rose laid \$1,000 out and at the same time the house was available for rent. The idea was a free place, a hostel for street people, people coming and going on the road, so they could have a place to stay and get something to eat. That's where I still see the place as a functioning thing on the physical plane in terms of green energy. The experiment was - what happens when you give the hippies \$1,000 and let them run with their ideas? It was a love energy, too. The money came with love. The money was love. What's happening here looks to me very much like the first century Christian church.

All the time, people are asking who runs this place. We all do. They say "Well, you got to have a bunch of officers and everything." I guess they think God is not sufficient. If Moses brow a committee, all the Jews would still be in Egypt. We're all gurus and we all got each other.

The whole trip is a movie - a real movie with real people and real pain, real joy, real brothers, real sisters. In a way we don't know how anybody is gonna act when they get on stage, cause it's a new scene. I've heard a lot of fear. The fear is a fact, it's a manifestation of how a spirit is being. The first week of March '78 it got all wrapped up with people.



Those spirits that were coming from a fear place got wrapped up with bodies.

There were accusations without any proof that a black guy here at the Rainbow Co-op House named Teddy Bear had been stealing stuff and hassling women. Several people in the house were making the accusations. A lot of people in the house were aware that others were making the accusations.

I think a guy named Panama Red kind of took it on himself to be judge and jury for Teddy Bear. Teddy Bear had been confronted by some people who were missing things and all they got were denials. Panama had been drinking a lot for days. He had been in similar violent situations with other people in the house. There was also quite a lot of racial significance - "Get out of here, nigger" part what Teddy Bear was accused of doing. In many places whites and blacks don't know how to live together in love. Let's face it - we haven't accepted each other completely by any means. To Teddy Bear this was like a flop house. He didn't involve himself with the other people in the house. He just slept and ate and it was free. The fact that he didn't get involved made people more suspicious of him.

As I understand, Panama confronted Teddy Bear with a machete and told him he wanted him to leave. Then Panama was gone for the next few days. He was out on the land somebody let the Rainbow Co-op use, right outside of Austin. He came back and Teddy Bear was still here. They got into some fist cuffs - nothing that went very far. One of the black sisters here at the Rainbow Co-op, Marcelas, says that if a white man accuses a black man of something, all he's going to do is deny it because he's afraid.

Teddy Bear got his stuff and left. He felt really put down, I guess, and he wasn't going to stand for being put down that way. Five nights later he came back with a concealed gun. He said he was looking for a guy named Harvey who had accused him of stealing. Harvey wasn't there. Teddy Bear asked for a blanket to crash and didn't get one. Then apparently, he came upstairs to Panama's room, opened the door and pulled the trigger. Panama wasn't in the house. Teddy Bear shot a guy named Larry Smith twice. Larry was wearing Panama's coat. When Teddy Bear came out of the room, he was scared to death. It was amazing to me that he got out of the



house without somebody grabbing him.

A lot of people could have grabbed Teddy Bear, but they saw the gun. I could have grabbed Teddy Bear myself - he went right past me - but I let him go. I wanted him to get away. I didn't want him hurt. I didn't want a bunch of people to jump on him with their state of mind at that time. It's too easy to have a lynch mob. I just stayed with Larry's body until the police came.

Black people did not stop being here at the Rainbow House. They're still here. I haven't heard people equating blacks with Teddy Bear. Like, "You're one of those thieving niggers like Teddy Bear." I haven't heard that at all.

The publicity has only served to make the general public aware of the situation of people who can't fit into any place in American society without compromising their values. When you get a straight job, you're got to have transportation, clothes and you're got to put on an attitude, you're got to shuffle - be a voluntary nigger. There are not many jobs people can have that they really want to do. The only reward is monetary.

This Co-op House is going to continue. It's going to keep changing, which it already has in three months. A lot of the changes that have happened in the Rainbow House are just the number of people - and the green energy. We've had less money and more people, and that's caused people to become more fearful. The changes we're going through are like a baby learns. We're learning. We've only been in this situation a short time. A lot of people are learning how to live with a large group of people on a day to day basis. I think with the growth that goes on, it will become a less crazy place for everybody.

I was talking with a lawyer for the Human Relations Commission who wanted us to come up with rules and structure and goals. I'm going to get some of the stuff about what we're doing from the Rainbow Oracle - the white man's way, get it out of a book. There was something inside me that wanted to be expressed about being a minister. And now I feel more like a preacher than I ever have. A communicator - a brother - a drunk. I've been hearing people say for at least two months that this place ain't gonna make it. The thing is, if it only can have from now, it's been worth it.